

Cultures Blend in a Global Age

MAIN IDEA

CULTURAL INTERACTION

Technology has increased contact among the world's people, changing their cultures.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Globalization of culture has changed the ways people live, their perceptions, and their interactions.

TERMS & NAMES

- popular culture
- materialism

SETTING THE STAGE Since the beginnings of civilization, people have blended ideas and ways of doing things from other cultures into their own culture. The same kind of cultural sharing and blending continues today. But, because of advances in technology, it occurs at a much more rapid pace and over much greater distances. Twenty-first-century technologies allow people from all over the world to have increasing interaction with one another. Such contacts promote widespread sharing of cultures.

Cultural Exchange Accelerates

Cultural elements that reflect a group's common background and changing interests are called **popular culture**. Popular culture involves music, sports, movies, clothing fashions, foods, and hobbies or leisure activities. Popular culture around the world incorporates features from many different lands. Of all the technologies that contribute to such cultural sharing, television, movies, and other mass media have been the most powerful.

Mass Media More people in the United States have televisions than telephones. In fact, 98 percent of American households have at least one television set. Eighty-six percent of the homes have videocassette recorders (VCRs). In Western Europe, too, most households have one or more televisions. Access to television is not so widespread in the emerging nations, but it is growing. Recent estimates suggest that about half the population of the emerging world—some 2.5 billion people—have regular access to a television set.

Television provides a window to the world through daily newscasts and documentaries. The speed at which television can present information helps create an up-to-the-minute shared experience of global events. For example, in 2003, millions of television viewers across the world watched the war in Iraq. Wars, natural disasters, and political drama in faraway places have become a part of everyday life.

Television and other mass media, including radio and movies, are among the world's most popular forms of entertainment. Popular programs not only entertain but also show how people in other parts of the world live and what they value. Mass media is the major way popular culture spreads to all parts of the globe.

International Elements of Popular Culture The entertainment field, especially television, has a massive influence on popular culture. People from around

TAKING NOTES

Categorizing Use a web diagram to identify areas of popular culture that have become international in scope.



Global Patterns

International Baseball

The sport of baseball is an example of global popular culture. When American missionaries and teachers arrived in Japan in the 1870s, they introduced the game of baseball. Over the years the game gained popularity there. Today, some Major League teams have Japanese players and several American players play in the Japanese league.

Baseball spread to Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama, and the Dominican Republic in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Today baseball is a popular game in these and other Latin American countries. And more than 25 percent of the players in Major League Baseball come from Latin America.

INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY

INTERNET ACTIVITY Create a scrapbook of foreign players in Major League Baseball. Go to classzone.com for your research.

the world are avid viewers of American TV programs. For example, in Bhutan, a tiny country high in the Himalaya, ESPN, HBO, Cartoon Network, and CNN are among the most-watched channels. CNN truly is a global channel, since it reaches more than 200 million households in over 200 countries.

Television broadcasts of sporting events provide a front-row seat for sports fans all over the globe. Basketball and soccer are among the most popular televised sports. National Basketball Association (NBA) games are televised in over 200 countries. In China, for example, broadcasts of NBA games of the week regularly attract an audience in the millions. One of the most-watched international sporting events is the soccer World Cup. Nearly 63 million viewers worldwide watched the 2002 World Cup Final.

Music is another aspect of popular culture that has become international. As the equipment for listening to music has become more portable, there are only a few places in the world that do not have access to music from other cultures. People from around the world dance to reggae bands from the Caribbean, chant rap lyrics from the United States, play air guitar to rowdy European bands, and enjoy the fast drumming of Afropop tunes. And the performers who create this music often gain international fame. **A**

MAIN IDEA

Recognizing Effects

A What effects have television and mass media had on popular culture?

Global Impact: Cultural Crossroads

Rock 'n' Roll

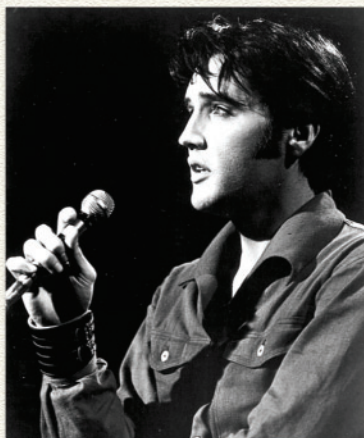
In the middle of the 1950s, a new style of music emerged on the American scene. It was called rock 'n' roll. The music explored social and political themes. Rock music, which seemed to adults to reflect a youth rebellion, soon became the dominant popular music for young people across the world. As the influence of rock music spread, international artists added their own traditions, instruments, and musical styles to the mix called rock.

"The King" ►

"Rock and roll music, if you like it and you feel it, you just can't help but move to it. That's what happens to me, I can't help it."—Elvis Presley, called the "King of rock 'n' roll" by many.

U2 ►

U2, led by singer Bono (right), is one of the world's most popular and influential rock bands. Over a career spanning more than 20 years, this Irish band has kept its music vibrant and fresh by absorbing and reworking all manner of musical styles. The band has drawn on the blues, gospel, 1950s rock 'n' roll, 1960s protest songs, and hip-hop to create a very distinctive kind of music.



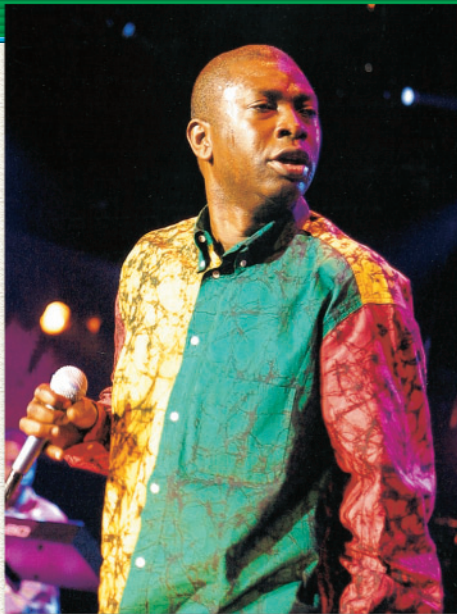
World Culture Blends Many Influences

Greater access to the ideas and customs of different cultures often results in cultural blending. As cultural ideas move with people among cultures, some beliefs and habits seem to have a greater effect than others. In the 20th century, ideas from the West have been very dominant in shaping cultures in many parts of the globe.

Westernizing Influences on Different Cultures Western domination of the worldwide mass media helps explain the huge influence the West has on many different cultures today. However, heavy Western influence on the rest of the world's cultures is actually rooted in the 19th century. Western domination of areas all over the globe left behind a legacy of Western customs and ideas. Western languages are spoken throughout the world, mainly because of Europe's history of colonization in the Americas, Asia, and Africa.

Over the past 50 years, English has emerged as the premier international language. English is spoken by about 500 million people as their first or second language. Although more people speak Mandarin Chinese than English, English speakers are more widely distributed. English is the most common language used on the Internet and at international conferences. The language is used by scientists, diplomats, doctors, and businesspeople around the world. The widespread use of English is responsible, in part, for the emergence of a dynamic global culture.

Western influence can be seen in other aspects of popular culture. For example, blue jeans are the clothes of choice of most of the world's youth. Western business suits are standard uniforms among many people. American-style hamburgers and soft drinks can be purchased in many countries of the world. Mickey Mouse and other Disney characters are almost universally recognized. Western influence also has an effect on ways of thinking in other parts of the world. For example, people



▲ "World Pop"

Youssou N'Dour, a singer from the West African country of Senegal, blends traditional African styles with American rock to create a new form that has been called "world-pop fusion."




Patterns of Interaction

VIDEO *Cultural Crossroads: The United States and the World*

The spread of American culture, including sports, fashion, and fast food, has created an international culture recognizable in all corners of the globe. In some cases American culture is simply a powerful influence, as other societies blend American culture with local customs. Cultural blending is evident even in America's past. Symbols of American culture like baseball and hot dogs are themselves the result of cross-cultural influences.

Connect to Today

- 1. Making Inferences** How have improvements in technology and global communications aided in the blending of musical styles?
 See Skillbuilder Handbook, page R11.
- 2. Creating Oral Presentations** Find out the global origins of such aspects of American culture as rock 'n' roll and baseball. Report your findings to the class in an oral presentation.



▲ Kenzaburo Oe of Japan was awarded the Nobel literature prize in 1994. Oe studied Western literature in college, and he has used Western literary styles to tell stories about his personal life and the myths and history of his country.



▲ South African writer Nadine Gordimer won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991. Many of her novels and stories published prior to 1991 focused on the evils of the apartheid system. As a result, much of her work was censored or banned by the South African government.

from many different cultures have adopted **materialism**, the Western mindset of placing a high value on acquiring material possessions.

Non-Western Influences Cultural ideas are not confined to moving only from the West to other lands. Non-Western cultures also influence people in Europe and the United States. From music and clothing styles to ideas about art and architecture, to religious and ethical systems, non-Western ideas are incorporated into Western life. And cultural blending of Western and non-Western elements opens communications channels for the further exchange of ideas throughout the globe.

The Arts Become International Modern art, like popular culture, has become increasingly international. Advances in transportation and technology have facilitated the sharing of ideas about art and the sharing of actual works of art. Shows and museums throughout the world exhibit art of different styles and from different places. It became possible to see art from other cultures that had not previously been available to the public.

Literature, too, has become internationally appreciated. Well-known writers routinely have their works translated into dozens of languages, resulting in truly international audiences. The list of Nobel Prize winners in literature over the last 20 years reflects a broad variety of nationalities, including Nigerian, Egyptian, Mexican, South African, West Indian, Japanese, Polish, Chinese, and Hungarian. **B**

MAIN IDEA


Summarizing

B Name three advances that allow a greater sharing of the arts.


Future Challenges and Hopes

Many people view with alarm the development of a global popular culture heavily influenced by Western, and particularly American, ways of life. They fear that this will result in the loss of their unique identity as a people or nation. As a result, many countries have adopted policies that reserve television broadcast time for national programming. For example, France requires that 40 percent of broadcast time be set aside for French-produced programs. And in South Korea, the government limits foreign programming to just 20 percent of broadcast time.

Some countries take a different approach to protecting cultural diversity in the media. Television programmers take American shows and rework them according to their own culture and traditions. As an Indian media researcher noted, “We really want to see things our own way.” Other countries take more drastic steps to protect their cultural identity. They strictly censor the mass media to keep unwanted ideas from entering the land.

Sometimes people respond to perceived threats to their culture by trying to return to traditional ways. Cultural practices and rites of passage may receive even more emphasis as a group tries to preserve its identity. In some countries, native groups take an active role in preserving the traditional ways of life. For example, the Maori in New Zealand have revived ancestral customs rather than face cultural extinction. Many Maori cultural activities are conducted in a way that preserves Maori ways of thinking and behaving. In 1987, the New Zealand government recognized the importance of this trend by making the Maori language one of the country’s official languages. 

MAIN IDEA
Recognizing Effects

 How do people react against greater global interdependence?

Global Interdependence Despite the fear and uncertainty accompanying global interdependence, economic, political, and environmental issues do bring all nations closer together. Nations have begun to recognize that they are dependent on other nations and deeply affected by the actions of others far away. As elements of everyday life and expressions of culture become more international in scope, people across the world gain a sense of connectedness with people in other areas of the world. For example, the response to the events of September 11, 2001, was international in scope. People from around the world expressed their concern and support for the United States. It was as if this act of terrorism had struck their own countries.

Throughout history, human beings have faced challenges to survive and to live better. In the 21st century, these challenges will be faced by people who are in increasing contact with one another. They have a greater stake in learning to live in harmony together and with the physical planet. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., stated, “Our loyalties must transcend our race, our tribe, our class, and our nation; and this means we must develop a world perspective.”

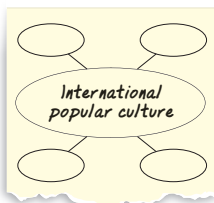
SECTION 5 ASSESSMENT

TERMS & NAMES 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- popular culture
- materialism

USING YOUR NOTES

2. Which of the international popular culture aspects has the greatest effect on your life? Why?



MAIN IDEAS

3. How do the mass media spread popular culture across the world?
4. Why do Western cultures tend to dominate other cultures?
5. What steps have governments and people taken to protect cultural diversity?

CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **CLARIFYING** Why are the mass media such an effective means of transmitting culture?
7. **RECOGNIZING EFFECTS** Do you think that limiting the amount of foreign television programming is an effective way to protect cultural diversity? Why or why not?
8. **FORMING AND SUPPORTING OPINIONS** “Ethnocentrism—the belief in the superiority of one’s own ethnic group—has taken hold in the world.” Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **CULTURAL INTERACTION** Write a **letter** to a friend in another country describing the elements of American popular culture they might appreciate.

CONNECT TO TODAY CREATING A SCRAPBOOK

Study current newspapers and magazines to find pictures that show cultural blending. Create a **scrapbook** of these pictures. Write captions explaining how each picture illustrates cultural blending.